



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 155

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2009

No. 77

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious Lord, King of our lives and Ruler of all, help us today to trust You with all our hearts and strive to stay within the circle of Your will. Turn the Members of this body back to the truth that those who would be great must be willing to serve humanity and that those who lose their lives for a worthy cause will find life everlasting. May such service and sacrifice bring deliverance to captives and balm to those who are bruised by life. Make our lawmakers, this day, receptive to Your wisdom, even amid the contention and collision of debate. Help them to shine with Your peace and good will. Lord, fill this Chamber with Your presence and each Senator with Your power for the work of this day.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 19, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BURRIS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that today, Tuesday, May 19, I be authorized to sign any duly enrolled bills or joint resolutions.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 627, the credit card bill. A rollcall vote will occur sometime within the next half hour or so. It may not occur immediately. When cloture is invoked, we will dispose of the pending amendments and then vote on passage of the bill, as amended. Rollcall votes are possible later in the day. We do know there are some agreements on a nomination, the Gensler nomination. There will be a

vote on that nomination after the caucus lunches today at about 2:15 p.m. Later this afternoon, we expect to begin consideration of the Iraq and Afghanistan supplemental appropriations bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL WAR SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today, the Senate takes up the supplemental war spending bill for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The need to consider such wartime supplementals is familiar to the Senate, but their importance has not diminished over time. Our Armed Forces have fought valiantly against global terrorism for more than 7 years, and our intelligence community has made invaluable contributions to that effort. This week, the Senate will show, once again, that we are grateful for the service and dependent on the heroism of every American fighting to help protect us at home and abroad.

Similar to any supplemental war spending bill, this week's bill must be viewed in the context of the broader fight against terrorism. This is a fight that began in earnest after the events of 9/11 but which found its justification in a long series of attacks that culminated on that terrible day. Eight years before 9/11, several Americans were killed in the first World Trade Center bombing. Two years later, five Americans were killed in an attack on a U.S. military site in Riyadh. In 1996, 19 U.S. servicemen lost their lives in the Khobar Towers bombing. In 1998, 12 Americans were killed in Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. In 2000, 17 American soldiers were killed in the attack on the USS

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Cole. Of course, on September 11, 2001, 19 hijackers killed 3,000 Americans in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

What is clear from all this is that terrorists were at war with us long before we were at war with them. But then, after 9/11, the Northern Alliance and U.S. forces, along with our allies, took the fight to al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Coalition forces later toppled Saddam Hussein and subsequently mounted a successful counterinsurgency against al-Qaida in Iraq that continues to this day. The supplemental we will consider this week funds all those efforts, and it provides vital assistance to Pakistan in its ongoing battle against insurgents.

One of the more contentious issues that has arisen in the course of this protracted fight is the fate of captured terrorists. Since 9/11, the United States has captured hundreds of terrorists who wish to harm Americans. Many of them have been brought to the secure detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Current inmates include some of the key coconspirators in the Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, as well as Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, the mastermind of the attack on the USS Cole. Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, is also there, as are a number of his 9/11 coconspirators.

Guantanamo was established to house terrorists such as these—dangerous men who pose a serious threat to Americans. The fact that we have not been attacked at home since 9/11 confirms, in my view, the fact that this facility, when taken together with all our other efforts in the global fight against terrorism, has been a success.

There is no doubt that some of the men who are held at Guantanamo are eager to launch new attacks against us. Of those who have been released from Guantanamo, about 12 percent have returned to the battlefield. One of these men is currently a top al-Qaida deputy in Yemen. Another is the Taliban's operations commander in southern Afghanistan. These are men who were thought to be safe for transfer.

More recently, the Defense Department has confirmed that 18 former detainees have returned to the battlefield and that at least 40 more are suspected of having done so. Earlier this year, the Saudi Government said that nearly a dozen Saudis who were released from Gitmo are believed to have returned to terrorism. This is a good reason to keep these men at Guantanamo until the administration can present us with a plan for keeping terrorists off the battlefield.

Some have argued that the existence of the Guantanamo prison serves as a recruiting tool for terrorists. But it is hard to imagine that moving this facility somewhere else and giving it a different name will somehow satisfy our critics in European capitals. Even less likely is the notion that by moving detainees from the coast of Cuba to Colo-

rado, terrorists overseas will turn their swords into ploughshares.

The global terror network we are fighting targeted and killed Americans long before 9/11 and long before we opened the gates of Guantanamo. Shutting this facility now could only serve one end; that is, to make Americans less safe than Guantanamo.

The supplemental spending bill that the Senate votes on this week will fund an effort to combat terrorism that has been hard fought. We have seen victories and we have seen setbacks and keeping detainees off the battlefield is part of the battle. Al-Qaida's terrorist networks remain vital and lethal, and releasing detainees to return to terror in places such as Yemen would be at cross-purposes with the underlying bill itself. If we are committed to funding the global fight against terrorism, then we will come up with a good alternative to Guantanamo before we move to close it.

The administration has shown a willingness to change course on other matters of national security. It is my hope that it will show a similar willingness on Guantanamo. As the Senate considers this supplemental, we will have an opportunity to encourage such a shift in their thinking by expressing our opposition to closing Guantanamo until a good alternative emerges. This is the only way to ensure the same level of safety that Guantanamo has delivered and the supplemental itself is intended to promote.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BURRIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURRIS. Mr. President, I would like to speak briefly on the credit card legislation which we are going to be taking up in a minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

CREDIT CARD REFORM

Mr. BURRIS. Mr. President, in these trying economic times, far too many Americans have had to watch their hard-earned financial security evaporate almost overnight.

Rising unemployment, rampant foreclosures, and shrinking market liquidity continue to run roughshod over American families. For some, credit cards have become a last line of defense.

Responsible spending on credit has helped millions of ordinary people pay bills and keep food on the table even as the economy continues to deteriorate.

I rise today in support of these hard-working Americans.

The need for credit card reform is crucial, and the time to act is now. We must pass the Credit CARD Act of 2009 without delay.

As credit availability tightens, the final wall of support is crumbling. At the slightest provocation, many credit card companies have chosen to take advantage of families in distress with unfair interest rates and drastic new fees.

Some people are suddenly confronted with a choice between large annual premiums or excessive rate hikes.

A Chicagoan, Mr. Weatherspoon bought a home several years ago and soon ran into some unexpected expenses. To consolidate his home repair bills that totaled over \$12,000, Mr. Weatherspoon applied for a credit card to take advantage of a low introductory offer of 4.5 percent.

Without notice, that low rate jumped to 28 percent. And he has been paying it off ever since. Over the last 8 years, Mr. Weatherspoon has paid the bank \$15,000, but has only reduced his principal balance by \$800.

These companies can change the terms of a contract at a moment's notice and without providing any reason at all.

This allows them to maximize their profits while keeping American families mired in more than \$950 billion worth of debt.

We cannot stand by as honest, responsible people fall victim to these predatory tactics.

We must not allow millions of Americans to be tricked and cheated as they struggle to make ends meet. Consumers are demanding relief, and it is our duty to provide it.

There is no place for that kind of greed in this new economy. There is no place for rising interest rates and record profits at the expense of good working people.

Now, as never before, we must move with urgency to shield American wage earners against exploitation and ensure that everyone gets a fair deal. This is especially true of those in need, and it is on their behalf that I address this Chamber today.

That is why I support the Credit CARD Act of 2009. This bipartisan legislation will give us the tools to fix a system that allows corporate giants to abuse their customers.

It will bring accountability back to the market and strengthen oversight. It will end abusive practices like hidden fees and sudden rate hikes.

Young consumers will be shielded by a provision that requires an adult to share in every new credit card agreement.

Companies will be required to use plain language instead of manipulative fine print, ending the predatory bait-and-switch tactics that got us into this mess.

Quite simply, this bill will restore fairness, honesty and plain old common sense to the credit card industry.

It will stop companies from changing the rules in the middle of the game,